

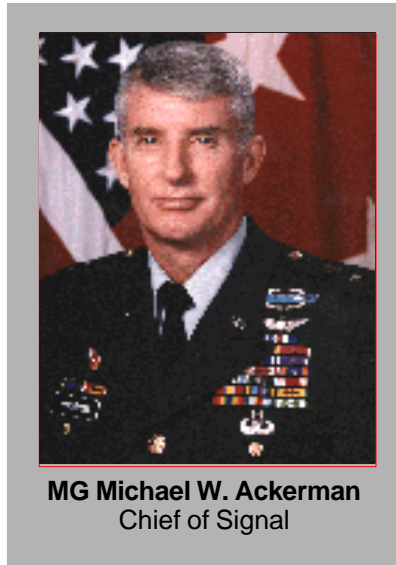
# Chief of Signal's Comments

## 'The knowledge age'

We passed from the information age into the knowledge age with the megaspeed of a two-gigabyte, 200-megahertz Pentium computer processing a byte of data. Information is all around us, and capabilities to receive that information increase daily. Take, for instance, a product of one of the defense industry's communications partners, Qualcomm—the new Qphone is not only a telephone but also an electronic-mail message center and an Internet access point.

The next century will be undergirded by a communications structure hardly imaginable now. Communications delivery methods – and society at large – are undergoing convergence and transformation. Convergence because the lines between work, recreation, education, entertainment and personal development are blurring. Transformation because the very fabric of our society is changing. All these because of the phenomenal growth of the worldwide web, multimedia, virtual learning, notebook computers, digital telephones, etc., etc. We work, we learn, we bank, we trade bonds, we shop via some kind of virtual link.

The knowledge age can only occur with information technology: developing and managing computer systems and hardware; data; and networked information and telecommunications systems. Further, the knowledge age will be pillared by those networks; we are becoming (and must become more) network-centric, as noted by symposium speakers. LTG Douglas Buchholz said it well when he noted that the J-6's big picture is "net-



**MG Michael W. Ackerman**  
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works, son, networks."

The knowledge age is enabled by the fact that people will be able to learn anytime, anyplace, with just-in-time knowledge and interactively with others. Our old methods of training will be transformed as we also use our physical-learning resources to conduct virtual learning: through teletraining sessions; computer-based training; or worldwide-web-delivered distance learning, for example. Knowledge-age learning will be perpetual. As LTG Paul Kern said at the recent symposium, we'll never stop going to school.

The knowledge age presents some tremendous challenges for the Signal Corps, but the biggest ones are twofold: one, provide the means to deliver the information; and two, train our soldiers and civilians so they have the technical skills

and knowledge to support the Army's missions.

This *Army Communicator* edition presents dual themes that mesh together well: coverage of the 1997 Signal symposium, where we learned the shape of what we'll need to know; and distance learning, where we can see the shape of how we'll learn what we need to know.

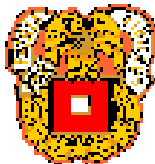
In sync with the knowledge age, we have symposium speakers' briefing slides available on our website, and – new this year — .avi clips from their speeches. Link into <http://www.gordon.army.mil/roa/symp/1997/>.

I hope your new year is off to a good start, and I look forward to the growth and change 1998 will bring all of us.

### Know more about the knowledge age

To start learning about the knowledge age, read:

- **The Third Wave** by Alvin Toffler, describes the revolution from industrial age to the knowledge age;
- "Information strategy in the knowledge age" by Nicholas Delonas, <http://www.digitalsg.com/ITStratgy.htm>;
- "What impact will be created by the diversity of learning in the knowledge age?" – outline form, <http://www.niu.edu/acad/dce/norris4.html>;
- "Cyberspace and the American dream: a Magna Carta for the knowledge age," Release 1.2, <http://www.dds.nl/~n5m/texts/charta.htm>.



**"Things don't change over time, things continue to change all the time." -- MG Michael Ackerman, closing remarks, 1997 Signal symposium.**